

How three small businesses found growth in a gloomy economy

The local coffee house – Asking for more
The Printing Store – Leveraging referrals & networks
The Real Estate Firm – Simple nurture marketing

Find out exactly how these three businesses were able to not only better serve their existing customers, but also attract new customers and grow revenue to levels they haven't seen in years. Remember, this was accomplished in spite of the worst economy since the Great Depression!

We'd like to introduce three clients we're currently working with, the trouble they had trying to find new customers, and what very specific actions they took to now having a banner year in terms of revenue growth.

How a local coffee house increased profits while improving their diner's experience

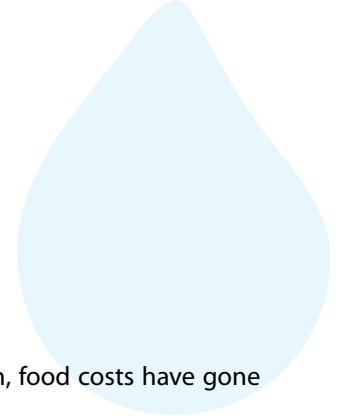
"The Drip" has been open for a little over four years. The first year was fun and exciting, the sales were steady and the staff was experienced, friendly, and professional. Everything you'd expect in a local family owned coffee house. That first year's success had a lot to do with them being the new "local" shop. It featured work by local artists, promoted local events, and WASN'T a big chain store. People loved supporting the store and in addition to a great cup of coffee, it offered a fun experience.

Revenue stayed steady the next three years, but didn't duplicate the rush of the first. Sales were consistent; the issue however was not being able to reach that next level.

After a thorough audit of the company's marketing, turns out they were doing just about everything right. They had a strong website with a blog that was constantly updated; they participated in local events and were very well known. Turns out what was missing were not so much a marketing vehicle but a sales vehicle.

The employees at the shop had gotten so good at knowing the clientele on a first-name basis as well as what their preferred drink was, service became automatic. Great way to keep happy clients, but there's more opportunity!

Think of in terms of a restaurant. If a diner orders the salmon dish and simply stays with a glass of tap water, both the server and diner lose. The server missed a great opportunity to up sell a glass or bottle of sauvignon blanc which increases the check amount which of course increases the tip given. The diner missed an opportunity to have a beverage that compliments the salmon and enhances their dining experience. A coffee barista has similar opportunities to offer the customers a confection that turns their cappuccino into a more pleasurable experience.



After training the staff on how to pair coffee beverages with the proper side dish, food costs have gone down 23% while sales increased 12% in the first six months.

The point here is your customers already know your firm and value what you offer them. Up sells or cross sells to this base is incredibly effective. Just keep in mind the additional sale you're offering must enhance their overall experience with you.

How a long time printer turned their loyal customers and internal network into an army of advocates

Print Express has been in business close to 15 years. Sales are down over 25% blamed primarily on the bad economy. A number of businesses who were steady clients either slowed their orders or closed business all together. The individual side of their business had been steady but nothing to make up for the loss of the corporate clients.

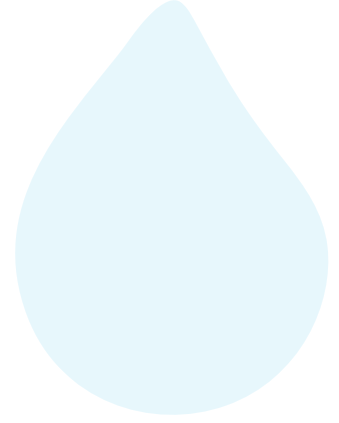
In terms of marketing, Print Express really hadn't done much in the past several years primarily because business was good...they didn't need to market. Or so they thought.

First of all, a strategic marketing plan completed years ago may have eliminated the stress of finding new business right away. That's another story.

For immediate lead generation we looked at building referrals through the existing clients and also networking opportunities. Unfortunately Print Express hasn't been part of any networking groups for several years. After looking at networking opportunities, it turned out there were many more options than they originally thought. The local Chamber of Commerce of course was the first target, but we also looked at other non-traditional groups to network with. The goal is to ensure as many of the targeted referral sources (more about this later) are advocates for your company.

It turns out our client was an avid cyclist so we looked at her joining the local cycling club. Also, her two children were still in grade school so we looked at joining the PTA. Turns out these non-business groups are a fantastic source of new business!

We also focused on a referral strategy targeting her regular customers. Knowing people respond very well to games and challenges, we created a referral game for the clients we decided were the best sources of referrals. Creating this list was a simple exercise of writing out the names of clients who knew the store and could be strong advocates. Some of the list had already referred new business in the past. The game included a score card the employees kept behind the counter and anytime a new client came in with a referral card we created internally showing the referrers name or mentions the referrer's name, the new client received 10% off their order and the referrer was entered into a drawing for a diner at a local favorite restaurant. The point wasn't the prize, but rather to get people engaged in the store. It worked like a charm! The point with the Print Express strategy is two-fold. First of all leveraging networking groups and making sure everyone knows what your firm does and can then effectively communicate that value to others. Second is to create a referral strategy that gets people involved.



How a real estate firm re-engaged with past clients for new sales

Real estate is no different from any business in that our relationships are what are going to make you successful, or leave you behind. Business relationships require the same amount of effort (and in some cases more) as personal relationships.

The Johnston Company was a positively unique real estate firm. When asked, they could easily differentiate themselves from the competition on a few different levels. All employees happened to be raised in the area and truly knew the neighborhoods, schools, and best living conditions for anybody. They were also able to process their own loan applications making buying a home for their clients that much easier and less stressful.

The marketing solution for The Johnston Company was an easy one. If someone approached them, they had all the answers. Trouble was they did nothing to keep top of mind with their past clients and prospective clients.

Nurture, drip, relationship marketing...it's all the same thing and focuses on more than staying in touch with people. With any marketing, you want to make sure you're giving people something of value. Something that will help their lives, or at least their business.

Our strategy consisted of strengthening relationships including a bi-monthly newsletter that gets delivered on the second Wednesday every other month. The newsletter is conversational and includes what's happening in the local real estate market, but also simple home improvement and energy saving tips and tricks. The newsletter is delivered in hard-copy except for the new clients and prospects that wish to receive an electronic version. We also give hard copy recipients an email address to notify us if they wish to receive future editions in electronic format, or simply remove them from the distribution. We're also testing client appreciation events and weekly one-on-one follow up meeting and informal lunches.

We're also leveraging all the great information of the employees in blog that's updated no less than every Thursday. A calendar has been created so the employees know when their posting is due.

Here are three unique businesses doing three unique (and effective) activities to grow revenue. Each activity is easy to do and relatively inexpensive to do.

How is your marketing strategy? **Contact us** today to schedule your free and no obligation 30 minute marketing audit. We'll take a good look at the marketing you're currently doing and look for areas to increase sales through your existing and future clients.